DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 140 703 HE 008 988

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TITLE Proposal of a Working Idea for a National Academy for Leadership Development in Postsecondary Education.
INSTITUTION American Council on Education, Washington, D.C. Office of Leadership Development in Higher Education.
PUB DATE Apr 77
NOTE 5p.
AVAILABLE FROM Office of Leadership Development in Higher Education, American Council on Education, One Dupont Circle, Suite 800, Washington, D.C. 20036

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.83 HC-$1.67 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Administrative Personnel; Courses; Facilities; Financial Support; *Institutes (Training Programs); *Leadership Training; *National Programs; Needs Assessment; Organization; Personnel Needs; *Post Secondary Education; *Professional Training; Program Administration; Programs

ABSTRACT

Proposed here is the concept of an entirely new, cooperative national service for American higher education: a national academy that is both a conference/training/learning center and a professional development program for the leadership of the nation's postsecondary education. Outlined briefly are: the concept, need, purpose, location and facilities, programs, academy offerings, possible cosponsored programs, resident staff requirements, organization and sponsorship, rationale, and funding ideas. (MSE)

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ED140703

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April, 1977

Proposal of a Working Idea for a...

NATIONAL ACADEMY FOR LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

IN POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION

Charles F. Fisher

THE IDEA: The national academy would be both a major residential conference center and a multi-service professional development program for postsecondary education leadership. It would offer an ideal setting and opportunity in which to teach, learn, and think.

THE NEED: The concept of leadership development for higher education has at last begun to come into its own. But the present multifarious efforts are disparate, often replicative, and of varying quality. There is need for better coordination, focus, and related support services. At the same time, higher education needs a broader range of training options for the development of its leadership, not to mention a clearer understanding of the relevance of alternative opportunities. Perhaps the time is appropriate for the establishment of a national academy dedicated to these goals.

THE PURPOSE: The national academy would conduct residential professional learning programs, pertinent future-oriented research, and a consultation service, all related to the professional development of administrators and trustees. It would also help coordinate, host, and assist with appropriate association-sponsored seminar programs at its facilities.

LOCATION AND FACILITIES: The academy would be situated at a conveniently accessible location within the continental U.S., initially at either an existing or newly-constructed facility (perhaps, e.g., in Virginia, Colorado, or Texas). Eventually, one or more additional "campuses" might be added. Each facility would provide lodging, dining, sophisticated meeting facilities, a comphrehensive library, the latest in A/V equipment, recreational opportunities, and a professional staff...to serve from 200 to 400 "students" at any given time.

THE PROGRAMS: The academy's training programs would fall essentially into two (not mutually exclusive) categories: (1) those planned and conducted by the academy itself, and (2) those cosponsored by outside organizations primarily for their own membership or ad hoc constituency. The overall objective would be to provide an in-depth training/learning opportunity for potential, novice, and even experienced college administrators and trustees, with program options and related services that would meet the specific needs of each individual participant.

ACADEMY OFFERINGS: The academy-sponsored activities would build upon some of the concepts of both C. Northcote Parkinson's "academic staff college" ("On the Making of a College President," Think, IBM, Sept. - Oct. 1970, pp.2-4) and George J. Mauer's "academy for higher education administrators" (Crisis in Campus Management, Praeger, 1976, pp.244-48). These offerings would provide an alternative learning (perhaps even credentialing) opportunity going beyond the capacity of short-term seminars,

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workshops, or institutes, even Harvard's six-week Institute for Educational Management, but far short of the requirements in time and hurdles of a graduate degree program. Indeed, the majority of "students" would probably be those who have completed their graduate studies in a non-administrative field or who have considerable relevant experience, who may be older, and who now have assumed, or are about to assume, positions of educational leadership responsibility in either administration or governance.

The academy would probably operate on a year-round basis and have as its curriculum a variety (15 to 20) of module courses, from a few days to a few weeks each in duration, with 2 or 3 offered at any given time. Various teaching/learning approaches would be used, including the case study method. Each intensive mini-course would cover a different aspect, topic, problem or concern in higher education, its administration and its leadership opportunities. Participants could enroll for selected short-courses, or, particularly those lacking administrative experience, for an entire program (say, for 15 to 20 weeks), which might then lead to an academy certificate. (The details of admission and the desirability of exams and certification would need some deliberation.)

For its faculty, the academy would call upon the best minds, experience, and national resources available...to relate, in an inter-disciplinary framework, theoretical concepts of organizational management to the practical applied art and science of academic leadership. This visiting staff of perhaps one to two dozen national educators, scholars, experienced administrators, and other experts at any given time, would each be in residence for various durations ranging from a few days to possibly several months. They would be invited in accordance with the academy's program needs on a schedule orchestrated by the academy's professional staff.

COSPONSORED PROGRAMS: The second category of academy programs would include those institutes, seminars, workshops, colloquia, and other conferences presently conducted by the various higher education associations and other organizations and agencies, for the most part from a few days to a week in duration. A glance at the Chronicle of Higher Education and our own Guide to Professional Development Opportunities for College and University Administrators illustrates the confusing array and sometimes duplication of these offerings. Coordination through the Academy would help delineate and/or consolidate, and hopefully improve, these many programs, and also provide the opportunity to utilize the academy's many resources, including its meeting facilities and its visiting faculty.

Individual associations would contract with the academy for a particular program they may be planning and work out a cooperative and mutually desirable "booking" of the facilities, program schedule, use of resource staff (both the academy's and the association's), and financial arrangements. (The academy, of course, would have a standard schedule of shared-cost alternatives.) The advantage to associations would be at least fivefold: (1) they would not have to keep searching the nation for suitable conference facilities; (2) they would not have to pay extravagant commercial rates; (3) they could turn their physical meeting arrangements over to the experienced academy staff; (4) they could benefit from the academy's program ideas if they wished; and (5) they could call upon the academy's visiting dignitaries for some of their program leadership. The financial savings and psychic relief would be irresistible and the program opportunities, exciting.

RESIDENT STAFF: In addition to the visiting teaching staff, the academy would have a professional residential staff comprised of an executive director, a program director, one or more conference program coordinators, a business manager, a facilities director, and various non professional (support) staff members as necessary for the academy's efficient and effective management and operation.

ORGANIZATION AND SPONSORSHIP: The establishment of a National Academy for Leadership Development in Postsecondary Education would be a very logical extension of the American Council's Office of Leadership Development in Higher Education. Nonetheless, it probably should be separately incorporated as a non-profit institution of learning, with a board of trustees comprised of experienced administrators and educators representing all sectors of American postsecondary education. Since the academy would closely cooperate with the national higher education associations, ACE and other Higher Education Secretariat member groups would appropriately have some representation on the academy's governing board. There would also be an Advisory Council of association representatives and other experts directly involved in leadership development, which would advise the academy director and his/her staff on general policy, professional development needs, and new program opportunities. This council would serve in a capacity similar to ACE's national Commission on Leadership Development in Higher Education.

NOT A NEW CONCEPT: The idea of a major national residential training center for new or potential managers within a profession, of course, is not novel. Industry has had such facilities and programs for years. One need only look, for example, at American Airlines, the American Management Association, the American Newspapers Publishers Association, IBM, Motorola, TWA, and Xerox, to be impressed with just a few of the successful efforts to establish residential learning centers for their leadership. Our U.S. Government, too, has its Federal Executive Institute for top-level agency personnel.

But American higher education is still wanting. England has its Further Education Staff College for the development of senior staff from its technical colleges. The Salzburg Seminar in American Studies has long been a viable residential learning program for foreign leaders, calling upon visiting experts from the United States. Maybe it is time for such a concerted effort at home...dedicated to the future leadership of our institutions of higher learning.

PRESENT FACILITIES ALSO INADEQUATE: Why, one might ask, could not existing Kellogg Centers for Continuing Education and other conference centers such as Airlie House, the Aspen Institute, and Wingspread meet this need? Well, they do in part, and could continue doing so. But transportation to these centers is frequently difficult, they are often limited in their capacity and fully booked long in advance, and the Kellogg Centers primarily serve regional conferences, as they should. Besides, the increasing number of professional development programs in higher education in recent years has created a new need demonstrated by so many meetings being held at hotels around the country...an experience both costly and frequently frustrating. And most important is the fact that the present dispersed situation does not provide for the proposed academy concept of national coordination, resident scholars, research, and related professional development services.

FUNDING: As with any major project, finarcial resources are crucial, not only to get a noble idea off the ground, but to sustain the endeavor. Realization of a National Academy for Leadership Development in Postsecondary Education would take substantial cooperation and commitment. In our democratic, pluralistic society, with our decentralized system of education designed as a safeguard against central governmental control, financial support for such a venture would necessarily come primarily from the private sector.

Initial funding might appropriately be provided by a "consortium" of major philanthropic foundations representing a select group with particular concern about the leadership of American postsecondary education (e.g., Carnegie, Exxon, Ford, Kellogg, Lilly, Mellon, Rockefeller, Shell, Sloan, and/or others). Eventually, other interested foundations and corporations could be given opportunities to make their contributions. With sufficient foundation commitment, then commercial funds could be

attracted, including bank loans. Some corporation might even be encouraged to make a gift of some real estate and/or existing conference facility.

The academy's financial operation would be similar to that of a typical college. Program fee, room and board, and contract revenue would help meet current operating costs, supplemented by philanthropic support and, in the long run, by income from an endowment that would be built up, in part through deferred gifts, over the years. Individual philanthropists and private family foundations could be an additional potential source of funds for such opportunities as library collections, meeting rooms, recreational facilities, endowed chairs, scholarships, etc.

A careful cost analysis of establishing the academy, including planning, site and facility acquisition, necessary construction, staffing, maintenance, program development, services, etc., would be conducted by a committee of experts who would then propose a budget and timetable for the start-up years. Total costs would perhaps fall somewhere between $6 and 12 million for the first three years, depending upon the scale and schedule of the undertaking. Venture capital in the neighborhood of $100,000 could provide for an initial exploration of the desirability and feasibility of the academy idea and what the alternative academy approaches and their probable cost factors would be.

SUMMARY: What has been proposed here is the concept of an entirely new cooperative, national service for American higher education...a national academy that is both a conference/training/learning center and a professional development program for the leadership of U.S. postsecondary education. Such an academy could help enhance our nation's present diverse attempts at improving the administration and governance of our institutions of higher learning. And it could well have a profound impact on the future leadership, direction, and viability of America's colleges and universities. The concept is valid, the need appears to be real, the time may be ripe, and the possibility excites the imagination.